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Stark County Law Library Association

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BEGINNERS

Spreadsheet 101—The Basics

**The email
address,
info@starklaw
library.org
really works!
TRY IT!!**

**Now is the time
for all good
computer users
to remember to
practice their
typing skills.**

**Get out that
typing program
you bought last
year and
practice,
practice,
practice!**

Your first lesson will be to replicate one of Joe Harley's examples from last month showing how useful spreadsheets can be to visualize the progress of cases by seeing who has responded to discovery.

But before we begin to construct the spreadsheet, you are going to need to learn some terms and commands that are pretty basic to both Lotus 123 and Excel. We'll use a tutorial for Excel because Microsoft is still the most widely used platform.

There are many tutorials to choose from, put "excel tutorial" into a search engine and you will come up with several choices. I chose BayCon Group because it is very detailed, easy to follow, and covers everything we need for today's lesson. It is located at <http://www.baycogroup.com/excel.htm>.

You already know most of the material you will encounter in Lesson One of the tutorial because Excel is very similar to using a word processor. So if you feel comfortable skipping sections, great! If not, just work your way through the tutorial at your own pace.

For our first lesson, the only numbers that we will be using are dates, so skip over the mathematical calculation and formatting information. We'll get to that in a future

article! For now concentrate on Lesson Two, "Entering Text".

As you are working on the tutorial, keep in mind that it was created using Excel 97. There will be some minor differences, but nothing you can't handle!

OK, let's begin by opening a blank Excel workbook. Now select one of the cases you are working on right now which includes people who must be deposed.

Click your mouse in cell A1 and type "NAME" (without quotes), in cell B1 type "DATE" and just in case you have a long deposition, let's put another "DATE" in cell C1. Now in column A, beginning in cell A2, list of all the people who are being deposed. And in Column B, type the date of their deposition beside each person's name. If the deposition will take more than one day, add those dates in column "C". You may even need to add a column "D" or "E".

I'm sure that you have found that column A is too narrow to show the whole name, so let's make it wider. Using either method presented in the section "Changing a Single Column Width" of your tutorial make column "A" wide enough to contain the longest name on your list.

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BEGINNER

Spreadsheets 101 (Continued)

Now we'll use Mr. Hartley's method of making it easier to visualize the progress of the case by seeing who has responded to discovery.

He chose the background color red to indicate depositions that had been completed. Your tutorial didn't cover this, but it's easy.

Click on the **number** of the row for your first completed deposition (the line will be highlighted), then just click on the "Fill Color" button (a tilted bucket with a colored line underneath) on the formatting toolbar and slide your mouse to the red square and release. If your "Fill Color" button is hidden,

click the >> symbol to show the rest of your tools. Use green for any on-going depositions and gray for those that haven't been taken.

If you want to alphabetize your list of names, click in cell A2 and drag the mouse diagonally downward until there is a dark outline around all of your data. Let up on your mouse and select Sort under Data on the toolbar and select Column A and Ascending, or click on the A/Z down arrow icon on the formatting bar.

There, you have created a useful spreadsheet!

INTERMEDIATE

Check Your Spell-Checker

Spell-checker, Friend or Foe?

The following is a summarization of Arthur L. Smith's article for TechnoLawyer's "TechnoFeature" on September 4, 2002.

Mr. Smith begins his article by pointing out that "The bond that ties a client to his attorney is a fragile one..." and one way to fray the bond is to send him/her a document filled with errors.

Most of you use computers to generate letters, briefs, and pleadings as you represent your clients, and have at least a fairly recent version of Microsoft Word or WordPerfect as your principal word processing software. Each of these word processors provide spell-checking software designed to prevent you from sending out one of those client-annoying error-filled letters. But is your spell-checker a sure thing? It might not be as fail-safe as you think.¹

First of all he stresses the importance of *always* using your

spell-checker "for every document you create (including e-mail messages)." ² But points out that spell-checkers can cause as many problems as they fix.

One of the problem areas is the custom dictionary. The "Add to Dictionary" button may have created a monster that "ignores those words in all your other documents, even when the customized spelling does not apply."³

He points out that you can "minimize custom dictionary problems, [by using] the 'Ignore All' feature of your spell-checker for client-specific words instead of adding them to your custom dictionary, or create separate custom dictionaries for each client or matter."⁴

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INTERMEDIATE Check Your Spell-Checker (Continued)

Special points of interest:

- **Is your spell-checker a sure thing?**
- **Beware the custom dictionary**
- **Use “Ignore All” more frequently than “Add to Dictionary!”**
- **ALWAYS PROOF-READ!**

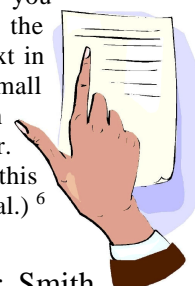
Another way in which your spell-checker can let you down has to do with a feature that allows it to ignore words in all caps. We lawyers have a tendency to overuse capitalization in our documents. Who can read the five hundred word Disclaimer of Warranties contained in 10 point all caps somewhere buried in the document? (Oh, wait a minute, maybe that's the point.)⁵

Double check your settings. In Word 2002, you'll find “Ignore words in UPPERCASE” and several other important options (e.g., “Ignore Internet and File Addresses”) by clicking the “Options” button in the spell-checker.

His final suggestion is to *always* proof-read carefully every document you send out.

While your spell-checker will catch misspelled words, it will not catch misused words. There is no substitute for taking the time to read each

document carefully for errors which the spell checker will not catch. The computer is not perfect. It will not tell you about errors in word choice and errors in grammar. Words may be spelled perfectly, but you may not have chosen the right word for the context in which it appears. These small mistakes can annoy even the most casual reader. (Yes, the errors in this paragraph were intentional.)⁶



In his conclusion, Mr. Smith states that until computers can think for us, we “must remain as vigilant as ever lest these modern marvels let you down.”⁷

Arthur L. Smith is a member of the St. Louis law firm of Husch & Eppenger, LLC where he leads the firm's e-Business Team. He is a former co-chair of the Technology and the Practice of Law Committee of the Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis. Arthur encourages comments as well as suggestions for future articles. You can contact him via e-mail (arthur.smith@husch.com).

ADVANCED Using JPEG

Last month I pointed out that JPEG was the best format to use for scanned images and photographs, large images or images with a lot of detail. The reasons behind this advice are that when using JPEG huge compression ratios are possible for faster downloading of graphics on your website or PowerPoint presentation and JPEG supports full-color images.

With the explosion of scanners, digital cameras, and the World Wide Web, the JPEG image format has quickly become the most widely used

digital image format. It's also the most misunderstood.⁸

- If a JPEG image is opened, edited and saved again the image will lose quality. The more times you edit *and* save the image, the worse the image gets. If you need to edit, do it all in one session saving just once.

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ADVANCED

Using JPEG (Continued)

While the JPEG image format has quickly become the most widely used digital image format, it is also the most misunderstood.

- KNOW your graphic software's compression settings. Your scanner or digital camera may use 100 as the highest quality image while your editing software may use 100 as the lowest quality and the highest compression setting.
- If you must decompress and recompress a JPEG image, use the *exact* same quality setting in order to limit further degradation of the image
- Subtle color shifting is one effect of JPEG compression (even at high quality settings) so use another format if precise color matching is an issue.
- JPEG should be used for archival materials only when disk space is an important consideration since the image will lose some quality each time it is opened, *edited* and saved.

JPEG is best suited for large photographic images where file size is the most important consideration, such as images that will be posted on the Web or transmitted via e-mail and FTP. JPEG is not suitable for most small images under a few hundred pixels in dimension, and it is not suitable for screen shots, images with text, images with sharp lines and large blocks of color, and images that will be edited repeatedly.⁹

For more information about the JPEG format:

- Visit the JPEG website at <http://www.jpeg.org/jpeg_about.html> and click on "Links" for: "JPEG Image Compression FAQ," "Graphics File Formats FAQ," and "General Compression FAQ."
- "JPEG image compression FAQ, part 1/2" at: <<http://www.faqs.org/faqs/jpeg-faq/part1/preamble.html>>
- "JPEG image compression FAQ, part 2/2" at: <<http://www.faqs.org/faqs/jpeg-faq/part2/preamble.html>>.

FOOTNOTES

¹⁻⁷ Smith, Arthur L. "TechnoFeature." TechnoLawyer. 4 September 2002. (E-mail newsletter) (copy on file with author).

⁸ Chastain, Sue. "Myths & Facts About JPEG Part 1." Graphics Software. 2002. About, Inc. 11 September 2002. <<http://graphicssoft.about.com/library/weekly/aa0104jpegmyths.htm>>

⁹ Chastain, Sue. "Myths & Facts About JPEG Part 2." Graphics Software. 2002. About, Inc. 11 September 2002. <<http://graphicssoft.about.com/library/weekly/aa0104jpegmyths2.htm>>